

An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a lush green landscape. The river flows from the top right towards the bottom left, forming several large, sweeping loops. The surrounding land is a mix of vibrant green fields and dense, dark green forests. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

**A unique framework for improved
management of shared waters**

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Outline



- Short introduction to the UNECE Water Convention
- Lessons learned on transboundary water cooperation

Twelve countries in the region can be considered water-stressed, representing a third of the region's population

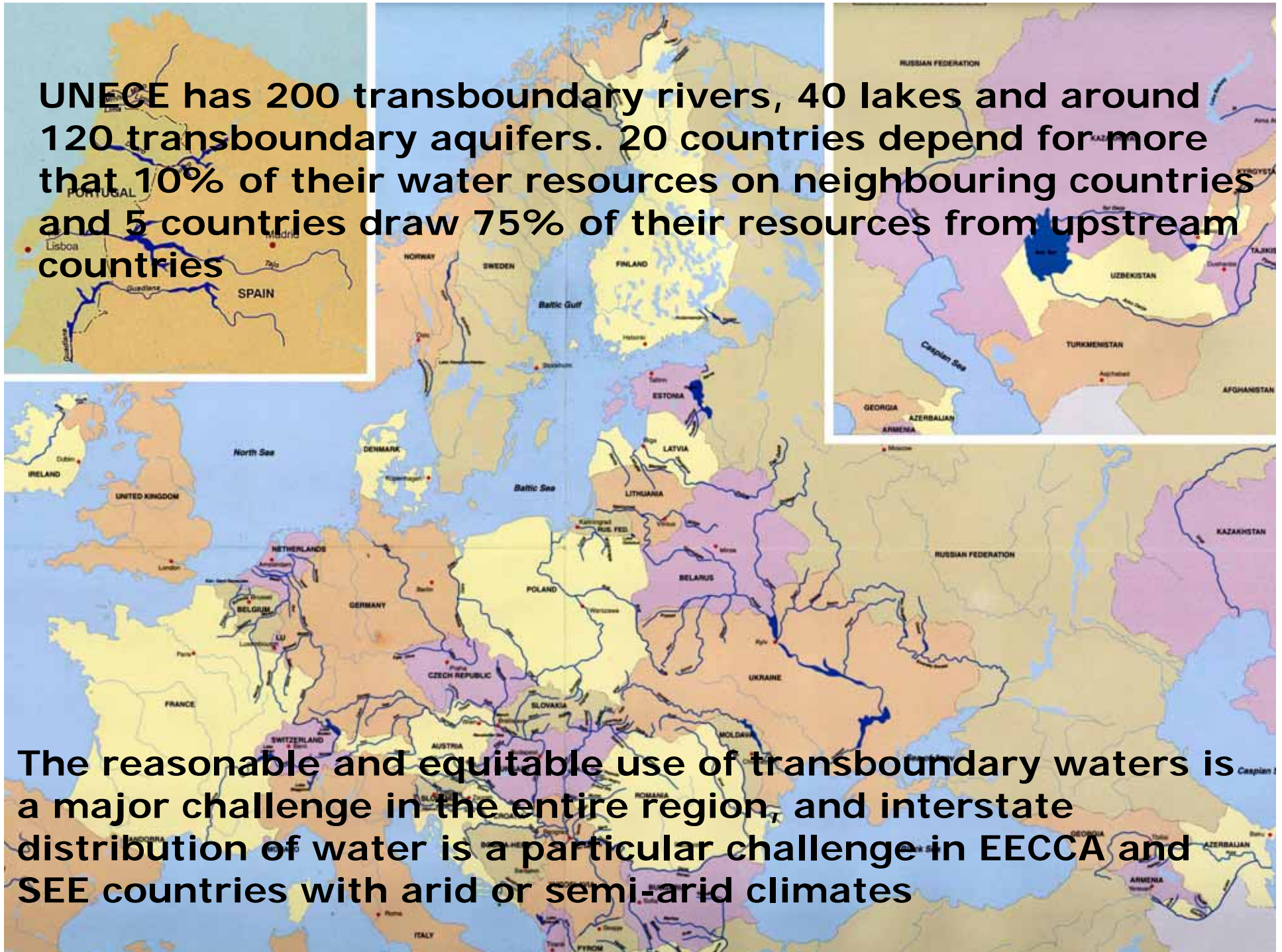


Since 2000, more than 100 major floods have caused at least 700 deaths, the displacement of about half a million people and at least EUR 25 billion in insured economic losses

An estimated 140 million people, i.e. one person in seven, do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation making them vulnerable to water-related diseases 13,500 deaths a year of children under 14 years of age in UNECE are due to poor water conditions

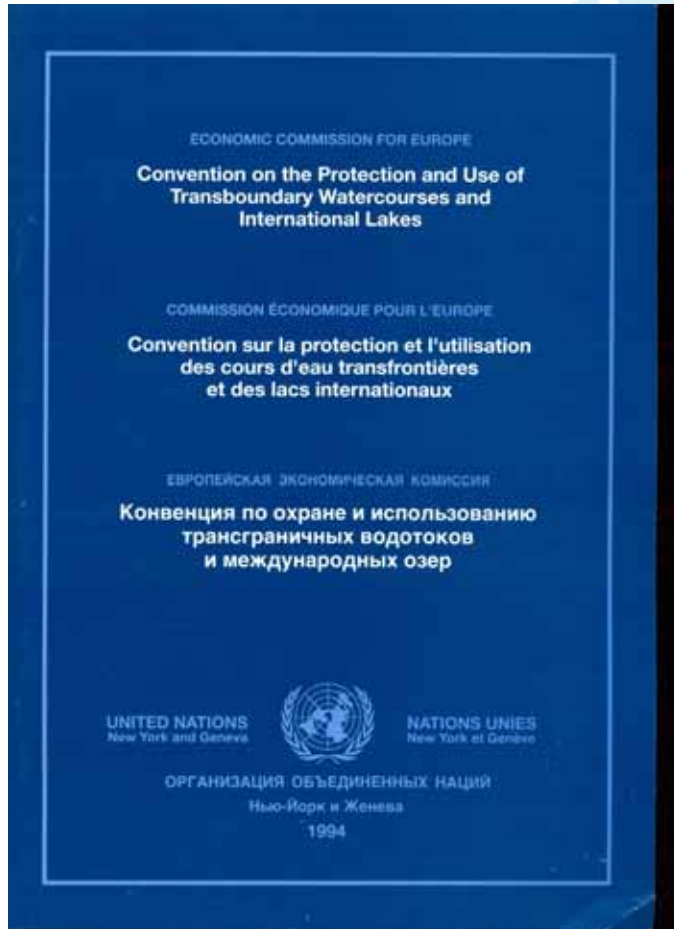


UNECE has 200 transboundary rivers, 40 lakes and around 120 transboundary aquifers. 20 countries depend for more than 10% of their water resources on neighbouring countries and 5 countries draw 75% of their resources from upstream countries



The reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters is a major challenge in the entire region, and interstate distribution of water is a particular challenge in EECCA and SEE countries with arid or semi-arid climates

The Water Convention



- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- 34 countries and the European Community have ratified the Convention

Aims of the Convention




- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Ecologically sound and rational management of transboundary waters
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters ⇒ Conflict prevention
- Conservation and restoration of ecosystems

Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

Parties bordering the same transboundary waters are obliged to conclude **specific bilateral or multilateral agreements** providing for the establishment of **joint bodies**

Examples: 1994 Danube River Protection Convention, the 2000 EU Water Framework Directive, Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin.



**Lessons learned from 15 years of
Convention's implementation:
the case of UNECE/OSCE
Dniester project**

Dniester River



Law for good water governance

- Sound legal framework is essential for stable and reliable cooperation
 - => existing Dniester agreement provides good framework for transboundary flood management but not adequate for conservation of resources and biodiversity and very general in specifying the competences and mandate of the Plenipotentiaries

Institutional arrangements

- Suitable institutional arrangements at the national and transboundary levels with strong enforcement capacity are a precondition for management of transboundary waters

Main challenges:

- Undefined, shared responsibilities within national authorities and lack of coordination
- Capacity of staff

Exchange of information and joint monitoring and assessment

- To assess status of water resources
- To prepare proper policy actions, evaluate their effectiveness
- Need for a common basis for decision-making

Main challenges:


- Inadequate coordination between various monitoring systems of different agencies
- Inadequacy of the systems
- Ineffective data quality control/assurance
- Inadequate information management and data exchange

Integration: a major challenge requiring to act in partnership

- Need to integrate environmental aspects in sectoral policies
- Need to create a shared vision and defined goals
- Need for cooperative processes

In the Dniester project:

- Involvement of all competent authorities
- Involvement of major environmental NGOs
- Involvement of Transdnjestrean Region
- Role of international organizations



Be realistic!
**Good transboundary water
management does not come overnight**

- Step-by step approach
- Assessment of the effectiveness of implemented programmes

More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

<http://unece.org/env/water>